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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BELGRADE 001169

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SUBJECT: SERBIA STANDS FIRM ON EULEX CONDITIONS

Summary

¶1. (SBU) While talks on EULEX deployment and the upcoming report to the Secretary General continue in Pristina, Serbian leaders are making daily public statements emphasizing that the language they have agreed to should not be changed and reiterating their three conditions for EULEX deployment: Security Council approval, status neutrality, and no connection to the Ahtisaari Plan. The opposition, meanwhile, is equating acceptance of EULEX with recognition of Kosovo's independence, and calling for a parliamentary debate on the issue. End summary.

Tadic in Warsaw: No Changes

¶2. (U) During a November 12 trip to Warsaw, President Boris Tadic told the press that "any change to the agreement that Serbia has reached with the UN on the reconfiguration of the civil mission is unacceptable, regardless of Pristina's expectations." Tadic said that Serbia is not opposed to the deployment of EULEX as long as it is status neutral and approved by the UN Security Council. He underscored that Serbia would not give up defending its territorial integrity in order to achieve EU membership.

Jeremic: "Final Word"

¶3. (U) On November 10, Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic announced that the UN had "accepted the [Six Point] text that was Belgrade's final offer." He said that the document would permit special arrangements in Serb-majority areas, and claimed it was proof that the Ahtisaari plan had been "put aside." "We have said our final word on the subject," the Foreign Minister stated, adding that "Serbia's conditions are known and they will not change."

¶4. (U) During a November 12 visit to London, Jeremic told the Economist magazine that "Serbia insists on the provision of neutral status being put on paper. If the Security Council adopts that provision, Serbia is ready to engage fully over that issue and help the EU and the rest of the international community in the province."

Jeremic stressed that Serbia shared the EU's view of the need to preserve peace and stability in the region: "We have a common problem. We have to stabilize Kosovo."

¶5. (U) After returning to Belgrade, Jeremic told Pink TV on November 12 that Serbia held to the three conditions and said that Pristina would have to accept the agreement that Serbia had reached with the UN. Jeremic commented that the authorities in Pristina were "used to achieving their interests unilaterally, through unilateral declarations, threats of violence and by violent means. They are not used to resolving problems through agreement. This time, Belgrade has resolved the problem through agreement and I think that the Pristina authorities will have no alternative but to accept this agreement between Serbia and the members of the UN."

Opposition Cries Foul

¶6. (U) Former Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, head of the opposition Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), has accused the government of indirectly recognizing Kosovo's independence by accepting EULEX. In a November 13 interview with daily "Press," Kostunica accused the Serbian government of working to end the UN Mission which "respected Serbia's territorial integrity" in favor of a EULEX mission that will implement the "constitution and laws of the false state of Kosovo." He claimed that the West has a three-stage plan for forcing Serbia to recognize Kosovo: the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, the acceptance of EULEX, and finally the acceptance of the Ischinger plan on good neighborly relations. Kostunica criticized the government for failing to consult and inform the National Assembly.

¶7. (U) Several opposition leaders have called for a parliamentary debate on EULEX deployment. On November 12, DSS party whip Milos Aligrudic said that members of parliament had the right to know with whom Serbian authorities were negotiating, and claimed that EULEX would work to establish Kosovo's independence. New Serbia leader Velimir Ilic said that acceptance of EULEX would be tantamount to recognizing Kosovo's independence, while Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) leader Tomislav Nikolic maintained that the government needed parliament's consent before agreeing to EULEX deployment.

Comment

¶8. (SBU) Although the opposition does not have the votes to take any action on the EULEX question, the Serbian government is

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nevertheless clearly concerned with managing public reaction and minimizing the far right's ability to capitalize on any perceived concessions to the international community over EULEX. End comment.

MUNTER